

**“IF YOU CAN”—“IF YOU CAN”**  
**NO. 2224**

**A SERMON**  
**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 4, 1891,**  
**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
**AT THE METROPOLITAN, NEWINGTON.**

*“If You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him,  
 If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.”  
 Mark 9:22, 23.*

WE are all familiar with the story of this youth, who was possessed by a dumb spirit, which caused him to fall into violent fits of epilepsy, and worked worse evils, casting him, at times, into the waters and into the fire, to destroy him. The father intended to bring his child to Jesus, of whom he had heard so much, but our Lord being absent, he made his application to the disciples. They failed to effect a cure; but by and by the Master came from the mountaintop, and then the father addressed himself to the Lord. I shall want you to notice some lessons from this story before I come to the text.

The main thought which I would emphasize is that our Lord would have us clearly know, when we seek a blessing, what it is we really seek. If you go to Jesus Christ for anything, either for yourself, or someone else, the Savior will earnestly desire that you should know what it is that you are asking of Him. You know there is much blind praying; asking for mercies because you know that such and such words are proper, without having a clear and vivid idea of what the blessing is which is intended by those words. Now, our Savior loves us to pray with the understanding, and to have a consciousness of our need, and some perception of what it is that we want Him to do; therefore try to get into your own heart a clear notion of what it is that you are seeking, for Christ would have you know why and for what reason you are pleading with Him.

Hence, when this man came with his sick child, the Savior permitted him to give a statement of the case, and, with the eagerness of love, the father entered into full particulars of the evil which had befallen his son. This was not needed by the Savior for His own information; He knew all about the dumb spirit's possession of the poor lad, and all the misery that had resulted from that possession, but the heart-rending account was given, first, in order that the father might distinctly remember the evil from which he desired his child to be saved, and, then, that those who were standing round might know what kind of miracle it was which Jesus Christ was about to work. Sometimes it will be a very healthy thing for seekers to stop a while, and say to themselves, “What is it we are seeking?” Christ may say to you, “What do you want that I should do for you? What is it are you really asking for?” There are many that cry, “Lord, save me!” who perhaps have no distinct idea from what they are to be saved, or to what they are to be saved.

In connection with this statement of the case, our Lord had permitted this poor man to make an application to His disciples. I will not say that it was on purpose that he might meet with a failure, but I do believe that failure was meant to teach the man a valuable lesson, and certainly it was designed to instruct the disciples, showing clearly to both that all hope lies in Jesus Christ Himself. You have been seeking, dear friend. Now, how have you hoped to get saved? “Why, by attending the means of grace,” you say. Quite right; and I have not a word to say against the means of grace any more than I should have had a word to say against the apostles; but the means of grace cannot save you any more than the apostles could cast the devil out of that child. It is not the means of grace, but it is Christ Himself that you must get to, just as it was not the apostles but the apostles' Master, who had to work this miracle. Perhaps you have been sitting in these pews for years, expecting something to come to you by your constant and continued attendance. The Lord wants to get you thoroughly convinced that you will not be

saved except by going to Jesus Christ Himself. No Bible-readings, no sermon-hearings, no, no prayers even, if they are relied upon, can save you. Your reliance must be upon the wonder-working Christ of God. If you will trust the Savior, you shall be saved at once. If you can believe now, you shall have immediate forgiveness of every sin, and instantaneous salvation by the power of the Christ of God. But, it may be, you have not thought of this. You have been going round about, and now you are to be sickened of all that, so that you shall say, like the man in the narrative, "I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast him out, and they could not. I have used the means of grace, I have heard Your ministers, I have read good books, but neither books, nor ministers, nor services, nor all combined, can cast the devil out of me. Lord, You must do it." The failure of every other hope is another thing that Christ would have us know when we come to Him for a great blessing.

Yet further, when the poor father had stated the case, and had confessed that he was disappointed with the disciples, yet the Savior caused him to see another exhibition of the mischief from which he would have his child saved. There and then, before them all, as they brought the boy to Jesus, the devil began to tear him, perhaps more violently than ever; he foamed at the mouth, and seemed, at last, to fall into such a condition that those who looked on said, "He is dead. The case is utterly hopeless." In the very presence of Christ, the evil spirit made a supreme effort to retain his hold of his victim, or to destroy the body in which he dwelt, before he left it. Now, beloved, the Lord may, in your case, if you are a seeker, permit sin to break loose in you in a possibly worse form than you have ever seen it, before He drives it out. It may be you will give yourself up for dead, in fact, I hope you may; for when death strikes every carnal hope, and you utterly despair of salvation in yourself, then is the very moment when the omnipotent power of divine grace comes in, and manifests itself without limit. Oh, you who are driven tonight to utter self-despair, I am glad of it! I expect to see Christ come to you, and raise you up, and say to the evil spirit, "Depart, and enter no more into him." God grant it may be so! Or, if your anxiety is about somebody else, it may be that God will permit the sin in the dear one to break out worse than ever. You have been praying for months, perhaps for years, and, at last, it will seem quite hopeless. You will bring your husband or your child to Christ and instead of seeing any change for the better, there may appear, at the time, to be even a change for the worse. Yet, remember, it was then that Jesus said, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes." It may be that He will let us see, more vividly than we have ever perceived before, the desperateness of the case, in order that we may the more clearly understand the greatness of the mercy which we are seeking at His hands.

I shall run the text, as it were, with two handles. You see, properly, it should be confined to the case of a person who is praying for others, for this was spoken to a father who was pleading for his son. But the same principle applies all round, and so I beg those who are praying for themselves to take as much of the sermon home as they can, and may God the Holy Spirit make it suitable to them! Come we, then, with this introduction, to our text.

There are two "ifs" here. The poor, troubled man said to Christ, "If," implying some measure of doubt, "If you can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Then comes the other "if," Jesus said unto him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes."

**I.** Let us begin by saying, in the first place, that THE "IF" IS NOT IN REGARD TO CHRIST as to whether He can save you, or as to whether, in answer to prayer, He can save the object of your anxiety. There really is no "if" in reference to Christ, though it is quite probable that your unbelief is suggesting some doubt about His love, or power, or willingness to save.

There cannot be any "if" about Christ being able to save a sinner, or to do anything; because, first, *He is God's beloved Son*. Upon the snowy slopes of Hermon, adown whose steeps He had come to confront the multitude in the plain, Christ had been transfigured, and in all His glory He had shone like the sun in the presence of His three disciples, whiter than the snow which lay around them, and out of the cloud which overshadowed them there had come forth a divine voice, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him." Now, if Jesus Christ is such a favorite of heaven, the darling of the eternal Father, will He deny Him anything? I do not say that "if" as being at all doubtful about the matter. The revelation of the glory on the mount and the voice out of the opened heavens are evidence enough of His Sonship. Even the devil himself could not deny that Jesus was the Son of God. In the wilderness of temptation, he indeed said, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread," but he knew in his heart

that Christ was truly the Son of the Most High God. On many occasions, the demons, whom Christ cast out, cried aloud to Him, “You are Christ the Son of God.” Being God’s true Son, can anything be impossible to Him? Did He not say, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth”? When I think of the love which God bears to His dear Son, I cannot imagine Him stinting Christ in power to bless. He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, for He is the Everlasting Son of the Eternal Father.

And remember, next, if that argument is not enough, that *Jesus Christ is God*. After that, can there be any “if” as to His power? What is there that God cannot do? He has made this world. He has made those millions of worlds that stud the midnight skies, but all that God has ever made, though it is far beyond our conception, is but as a speck compared with what He could make if He pleased. He has done exceedingly great marvels, such as have astounded men, but all that God has ever done is as nothing compared with what He could do if He willed to do it, for with Him all things are possible. And Jesus Christ being very God of very God, all things are possible with Him. He can save everyone present in this house now. Breathe a believing prayer to Him, and you will prove His power, for He will save you. His word runs very quickly, and if He does but send it forth, it will belt the world, and within the next few years, if He chooses so to work, all nations shall call Jesus blessed. But when you and I have one of God’s promises to plead with Him, we may know most surely that He will keep it, we never need insert an “if” as to whether He can or not. O beloved, if we were more wicked than we are, He could change us, and if our children or our friends were sunk in sin more deeply than they are, which God forbid they should be, He could still save them. “The Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.” Fie on you, you doubting one! Shame on you, you trembling heart! There cannot be any “if” with the Christ of God, God’s favored Son, yes, God’s equal, who is girded with omnipotence.

And, in the third place, remember that, *as Savior, works of grace are easy to Him*. If you will but think for a minute of what He has done in order to man’s salvation, I think you will see there cannot be any “if” with Him. See Him hanging on the accursed tree, nailed up to the gallows that He may die. His pains of body are inconceivably great, but meanwhile He is forsaken of His God, and is brought into unknown tortures of soul. That is the Son of God who is dying so, it is He whose face is the glory of heaven who is thus dying the death of a felon, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” I have such a conviction of the power of Christ’s death, that if it were revealed to me that, on the cross, He redeemed not only one world, but as many fallen worlds as there are stars, I could well believe it. Oh, the blood of the Son of God! What merit there must be in such a sacrifice as that! Infinite Deity united to perfect manhood, and the whole life laid down that men might live! Tell me that Christ cannot save! Tell me that His blood will not wash out the most scarlet sin that ever defiled any man! I know better. There must be infinite virtue in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. There cannot be an “if” about the power of the Crucified to forgive all who come to Him, and trust in His great sacrifice.

If you question the power of His death, remember that He rose again from the dead, and upward He went into glory, and there today He sits enthroned. I think I can see Him now, at the right hand of the Father, clothed with everlasting honor and divine majesty. What is He doing? Look! He lifts His hands. He pleads for sinners. Will the Father deny Him anything? He makes intercession for the transgressors. Will God refuse to bless them? Oh, by the living Christ at God’s right hand, pleading the merit of His own sacrifice, I would have you confident that there cannot be an “if” about His power to save any of the children of men!

Do not tell me that you are the worst sinner that ever lived. I will take it for granted that you are, and I will go further than that, and suppose you are a deal worse than you think you are. I have sometimes had people coming to me as inquirers, and sitting in a chair opposite me. They have begun by telling me about their dreadful sins. I have generally said to them, “You need not tell me that. I have not the slightest doubt that you are a thousand times worse than you tell me, or than you think you are. You are only fit to be cast into hell,” and then they say, “Ah, it is so; it is so.” Right glad am I to hear them consent to the verdict, for that is the sort of people that Jesus Christ came to save. Do you think that He came to redeem some little miserable morsel of a sinner, who never did anything very much that was wrong? Well, very likely He did, but He came to be a great Savior for great sinners. Suppose that, some day, you

come and with glowing enthusiasm tell me there is a great doctor in London. I would probably say, “What does he do?” “He has a large number of patients,” you answer. “But what does he do?” At length you give the astonishing reply, “He cures bad fingers.” Well, I do not see much in that. But suppose, on the contrary, that in answer to my question, “What does this great physician do that you are crying up so much?” you are able to give a true report, and say, “He has restored a great many persons who were given up by everybody else. He can cure the very worst diseases; in fact, they say that if a man were almost dead, he could make him alive.” Why, then, indeed I would begin to sing his praises, too, and, if I were diseased, would go to him for cure. But I am more confident about the power of Christ to heal, for to Him I went when my sin was past all human remedy, and He made me every whit whole. There is no language strong enough to tell of His power to save and bless. If you believe that my Master can only save a small sinner, who has only a little imperceptible sin about him, I tell you that you do not know Him. He is a great Savior for great sinners, and however grossly guilty you may have been, lament it, mourn over it, but remember that Christ is able to save even the very chief of sinners. He is able to save them now, just now, where they are standing or sitting, and to send them out of this house, new creatures in Him.

Thus you see that the “if” is not in Christ.

**II.** But now, secondly, where is the “if”? **THE “IF” IS IN OUR LACK OF FAITH.** Jesus said to the man, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” But why is faith needed?

The answer is, first, that it is *a reasonable demand*, and that it is most unreasonable to expect Christ to do anything for us if we will not believe in Him. The very least thing that a great surgeon could expect of a patient would be confidence in his skill. Do not marvel, therefore, that Jesus Christ does expect you to believe in Him, and “if you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.” If you refuse Christ your confidence, you cannot wonder if He refuses you His salvation. “If you can.” It seems almost as if the Lord in astonishment echoed this poor father’s words, starting back in wonder that He should be so misunderstood, that any human being should come to Him, who created all things, and yet doubt His power. The poor leper, who came to Him after the Sermon on the Mount, had a different way of expressing his misgiving. He said, “If you will,” doubting not Christ’s power to heal, but His willingness. I know not which is the worse, but I am sure that both are unreasonable, for if either the willingness or ability is absent, Christ cannot be a Savior for sinful men. But, as we often sing—

*“He is able,  
He is willing; doubt no more.”*

Faith is needed, in the next place, because it is *for God’s glory*. It would not be for Christ’s glory to bless those that do not believe in Him. Shall He reward unbelief? Will you have it said that Christ came to this earth, and that He lived and died for the salvation of sinners, and that, after that, though a man would not believe in Him, He still gave him pardon and mercy? No, there shall never be such a thing as a pardoned unbeliever; a saved man who does not believe in Christ? That would be to the dishonor of Christ, and would make Him to be rather the patron of sin than the Savior from sin. Faith is required, then, that God may have the glory of man’s salvation.

This faith is also *for our own good*. Our Lord means to bless that poor man by healing his child, but He meant to bless him doubly by healing him of his unbelief, for it is indeed a horrible weakness, for a man to lack faith in His Creator; a loathsome disease of spirit, for a man to be doubtful of his God. I have looked down the list of crimes, and though there are some that are truly abominable, yet when I have looked into the very foulest transgression, I have not seen anything so vile as the sin of a man who doubts the love and power of Christ, who died that men might live. This is the masterpiece of hell’s temptation. We are led farthest away from God when we doubt the love which He has sealed with the blood of His own heart. It is therefore for our own good that we should believe. Here and always God’s glory and our good are closely joined. To glorify God will be to enjoy Him forever.

Faith, then, is a reasonable, glorious, and blessed thing, and in the sinner’s case *it is absolutely necessary to salvation*. We must believe in Jesus Christ if we would be saved. But cannot we be saved without believing? No. What will become of us if we do not believe in Jesus Christ? Well, I will make no “ifs” or “ans” about that. “He that believes not shall be damned.” I do not care to beat about the bush, or seek for any more refined version of the text: let it stand there in its own terrible simplicity, “He that

believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” If you do not believe in Jesus Christ, you will be damned whatever that means; and it means something truly terrible to be condemned of God, and driven from His presence, because we do not believe in Him. There is no help for it, for other salvation there is none, and other door of hope there is none, except through faith in the appointed Savior of mankind, as John Newton, that great sinner saved by marvelous grace, says—

*The worst of all diseases  
Is light, compared with sin;  
On every part it seizes,  
But rages most within.  
'Tis palsy, poison, fever,  
And madness, all combined:  
And none but a believer  
The least relief can find.”*

There is where the “if” is, then; it is in our lack of faith.

**III.** But now, in the third place, let me ask, WHAT PUTS THE “IF” THERE? Why is it that we cannot believe? If some unprejudiced person, who before had been totally unacquainted with the Bible, read it for the first time, and was asked, “Is it a hard thing that God asks of men in order to their salvation, that they should believe in Jesus Christ, whom He has sent?” any unsophisticated mind would reply, “No, that must be the easiest thing in the world, for God cannot lie.” Such a verdict would be absolutely true, for the gift of His Son, whom He loved as He loved Himself, proves the honesty of God, and leaves no room for doubt as to the certainty and the heartiness of His willingness to bless the sons of men. God could not be false, and go so far with the falsehood as to give His own Son to die; that is altogether inconceivable. It seems of necessity, then, that God is true in declaring that He will save those who trust in His Son, and it looks, at first sight, as if it would be the simplest thing in all the world to trust in Jesus Christ; and so indeed it is. But why is it that there are any “ifs” about it? Why is it needful that Christ should say, “If you can believe”?

The reason is because *we are alienated in heart from God*. If we were right with God, faith would be a matter of necessity. But we do not love God. By nature we even hate Him, and that is why we do not trust Him. It would be a very wretched thing to meet with a young man who, if you were speaking to him in praise of his father, should say, “I do not believe in my father.” If you continued, “But your father is a man of the highest integrity,” would it not be sad to hear him reply, “I cannot trust him”? “Oh, but your father is kindness itself,” you might add, and if the lad said, “Yes, I hear what you say, but I do not believe it, I cannot trust him,” you would know that there was some dreadful family feud, some most unhappy circumstance that had twisted that youth’s mind so that he did not love his father, and therefore did not believe in him. Supposing his father to be a man of undoubted repute and integrity, the last thing that you would expect to happen would be that his own son would say, “I cannot believe him.” Now, concerning God, who among us will so blaspheme as to say that He was ever false? Yet men do say it, and do not seem at all startled at what they have said. Though it is written, “He that believes not God has made Him a liar,” men will still calmly tell us, as if it were an amiable weakness rather than a sin, “Sir, I cannot believe in Christ; I cannot believe in God.” It is, then, because you are alienated from Him, because you do not love Him. Lament this; confess it before God, and when your heart is renewed by His grace, then faith will come as a matter of course.

Another reason for this “if” is that *we are idolaters by nature*. “No, no,” you say, “we are not idolaters.” I say we are idolaters by nature—all of us; for what is an idolater but one who wants to have an idol, or a something which he can see, and trust in, and which shall represent to him the invisible? The Romanist becomes an idolater as he puts before him the crucifix, or some precious relic of the saints. But you may become an idolater too, without seeming to be so superstitious. You are such indeed, if in providence, for instance, you cannot trust God; if before you trust Him you need to have your income regularly guaranteed. It is not God you then trust; it is the money. So with your soul. You could trust God, you say, if an angel were to come from heaven to speak, or if you heard a voice in the night. So, then, it is not God that you would trust, but an angel, or a voice. You want something to see and something to hear. It is ingrained in human nature thus to seek a sign, but what is that but idolatry? Oh, that

we would get rid of this, and say, "God is invisible. I am not to expect to see Him; I am to trust Him. I am to believe that He who made the heavens and the earth, and who gave His Son to die, will save me, and lo, I put my trust in His dear Son, once and for all!"

Another reason why this "if" comes in is *because we measure God by ourselves*. We cannot think that God can forgive us, because we find it so hard to forgive our fellow creatures. We cannot conceive that God will do it freely, from no motive but that of pure grace, because we are so mercenary. We want to be paid for what we do, and unless we can see some chance of reward, somewhere or other, we are very slow to make anything like a sacrifice. So we think that God is altogether such as we are, whereas you remember it is written, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." We get measuring God by our fellow men. We say, "Such and such a one is very good, but he would never forgive after this fashion. He would give generously, but he certainly would not give after the style that God is spoken of as giving." Thus, as the Ethiopians are said to make their angels with black faces, we imagine God to be like ourselves or other men, and therefore find it difficult to believe in Him. Dismiss from your thoughts all such ideas of God. You might sooner hold the ocean in the hollow of your hand, or span the heavens with your fingers, than, unaided by grace, get an idea of the greatness and glory of God by all your searching. Never forget that He is as great in mercy as in any other of His attributes. He delights to forgive. It is the joy of His heart to press to His bosom His prodigal children. Nothing gives such intense satisfaction to the heart of God as the manifestation of His boundless grace. I wish you could believe this. But it is because we thus limit the Holy One of Israel, that we find the simple matter of faith so difficult. Because of this there stands that great, ugly, black, stiff "if." "If you can believe."

**IV.** In conclusion, let me ask another question, and seek to answer it. HOW CAN THIS "IF" BE REMOVED? Are there any in this house who are longing to be saved, and who have been putting an "if" upon Christ, and saying, "Lord, if You can"? First, let them know that the "if" lies with themselves; and then let us join hands, and see if we cannot turn this "if" out. Come, brother, let me help you. If this "if" has been too strong for you, I would ask God's Spirit to bless a few words to you, that this "if" may be got rid of. With reference to that other "if" which came from the lips of the leper, and to which I have already referred, I heard of a little girl, whose mother found her one day with a carving knife and the family Bible. "What are you doing?" she asked her child, in some anxiety for the safety of both the child and the book. "O mother," she said, "I was reading about that man who came to Jesus, and said, 'If You will, You can make me clean,' and I thought He ought not to have said "if" to Jesus, so please, mother, I am scraping it out." A very good thing to do with all our "ifs." How shall we go to work with this one? Well, we had better imitate this man with his epileptic child possessed of a devil.

First of all, *you must confess the faith you have*. This man said, "Lord, I believe." There is something in that. If you cannot go as far as you would, go as far as you can. What do you believe about Jesus Christ? Come; poor, dear, trembling heart, run over in your mind now what you do believe about Him. I think I could have said, before I really trusted Christ, "Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God." I believed that; I never doubted it. "And I believe that You are sent to be the Savior of men." I do not know that I ever doubted that. Some of you from your childhood have believed that, too; your mother taught you that; and when you read the Scriptures, you were sure of it. Well, now, just turn that over. "Lord, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You are God. I believe You are able to save. I believe Your precious blood takes away the sin of all who trust You. I believe that whosoever trusts in You has everlasting life. I believe that You have sent Your gospel into the world, saying, 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.' Lord, I believe all this." That is a matter to be very thankful for, and yet, do you know, that is a matter that will condemn you unless you go farther; because, if you believe as much as that, you ought to believe more. I can understand the atheist or deist not trusting Christ. I can understand the Socinian not trusting Christ; but if you are sound in your doctrinal beliefs, I cannot think of an excuse for you, why you should not trust Christ. If a man says to me, "I believe you, sir, to be a thief; I cannot trust you;" that is perfectly consistent, is it not? But if he says, "Sir, I believe you are an upright man, who would not on any account do a doubtful thing, and yet I cannot trust you;" I am not anxious to answer such a man as that, for out of his own mouth he condemns himself. So, some of you go so far, that if you do not go farther you will condemn yourselves. Surely, in all reason, if a man can say to

Christ, “I believe that You are the Christ that should come into the world; I believe that You are the Son of God; I believe that You were raised again from the dead; I believe that you sit at the right hand of God, pleading for sinners;” that man must also add, “Therefore I trust You.” It is the natural inference to be drawn from it. God help you, then, to confess such faith as you have!

The next way to knock this “if” over, is to *appeal to Christ to be helped against it*. “Lord, I believe,” said this poor man, “help You my unbelief.” He cried out of the depths of his soul, “O Lord, help me against my unbelief!” So poor heart, you have been trying to believe! Did you ever try this man’s plan of believing that Christ could make him believe? That is odd, is it not? You see, he must have had faith in Christ, or else he would not have said, “Help You my unbelief.” Let us imitate him, and cry with Cowper—

*“Heal us, Emmanuel, here we are,  
Waiting to feel your touch:  
Deep-wounded souls to You repair,  
And, Savior, we are such.  
Our faith is feeble, we confess,  
We faintly trust Your word;  
But will You pity us the less?  
Be that far from You, O Lord!  
Remember him who once applied  
With trembling for relief;  
‘Lord I believe,’ with tears he cried,  
Oh, help my unbelief!”*

Oftentimes there is a great deal more faith in a poor sinner’s heart than he thinks there is. He really is trusting the Savior, and does not know he is doing so. He is saved, and yet is afraid to think it can be possible. Long after I knew the Savior, and believed in Him, I used at times to be staggered with the thought that it was too good to be true. The tempter would say, “It cannot be that you really are forgiven, that you are Christ’s own, that you are washed in His blood, and saved forever!” Well, it does almost seem to be too good to be true; but, then, nothing is too good to be true when you are dealing with a king. If it is a king who is about to act, we say that the grander and kinglier a thing it is, the more likely it is to be done. But rise higher than kings. If it is superlative, if it is infinite, if it is altogether inconceivable but for its having been revealed, then is it the more likely to be true, for it is the more like God. Oh, then, I pray you, bring your unbelief before Christ, and let it die in His presence! Unbelief does not like the cross. If you look up to the dying Savior, to the risen Christ of God, unbelief dies. God help you, then, to say, “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief”!

One other thing you must do if you are to follow the example of this father. *Bring the case to Christ*. This poor man brought his child to Christ. It was a hard tug, and he asked others to help him. Do you not see how the suffering child was tossed about, sometimes this way, sometimes that? You may have seen some poor man or woman who is subject to fits, and noticed in what a way such people are convulsed. But this poor child was much worse; he was foaming at the mouth, raving, tearing, and full of the fiend. The father is trying to help his boy; sometimes he holds him by the waist, then the child tears away; then another helps to grasp one hand, while the father gets hold of the other. He drags him to Christ; pulls him almost piecemeal to Christ; but he gets him there at last. “Bring him to Me,” said Christ, and what better could the father do, or can you do, than obey the command, and bring your loved one? So he did, and he laid him down at Jesus’ feet. Where else is so fitting a place for the sick or devil-possessed as the feet of the Savior? “To whom shall we go” if we turn away from His tender heart? When the boy in the harvest field cried out in pain, his father said, “Carry him to his mother.” Where else could he be so soothed and helped, and where else but in Christ can you or your children hope for blessing?

That is what I want you to do with your friends; get them somehow to Jesus Christ by mighty, vehement, determined prayer. And when you have prayed about them, try to get them to hear the gospel. I like to preach to people who have never heard the gospel before; it is grand work. There are some of you upon whom I fear that I shall never make an impression; you have been hammered upon so long that I am afraid you have become gospel-hardened. Take a person out to look at the stars—some countryman who has always been able to see. Perhaps he does not make any remark, or he simply says, “Oh, I have

gone across the moor many a night! I don't see anything particular in the stars." But here is an old man brought from the Ophthalmic Hospital; he has been blind for many years; in fact, he forgets whether he ever could see. By a skillful operation the film is taken from his eyes. Take him out at night, and the first things he sees are the stars. He says, "What a sight! How glorious! How divine!" Those are the kind of people to whom it is a joy to preach, for when the Lord gives sight to those who were blind, and they see for the first time, how glad they are to see Him! Persons who do not often have flowers are charmed with the sight of them, and find much delight in their fragrance. Yet I have heard of a flower girl, who sold violets in the street, and had to take those that remained home to her poor miserable room every night, till she said that she hated the smell of violets; she could not bear them, having got so accustomed to them. "That is strange," says one, yet that is how some of our gospel hearers speak. They say that we preach too long, and they begin to criticize our sermons. I dread above anything that your nostrils should become so familiar with the sweet smell of the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valleys that their fragrance should become nauseous to you. How sad it would be that any of you should get so familiar with the gospel that at last you would say, "What a weariness it is!" May this never be the case, and lest it should, come now, and bring your case before Christ! It is no use to bring it before me, and let me preach to you. It is no use to bring it before the mere means of grace. Turn to the Lord Jesus, who is beside you, and tell Him all the case; say to Him that you renounce all other hope, and trust yourself in His hands. Believe in Him this moment, lest haply the very gospel itself should be a "savor of death unto death" to you. If you trust to Christ, you must have life. O Spirit of God, help many to come this very hour, and trust in the Crucified, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

### PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MARK 9.

### HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—241, 435, 394.

Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood,  
September 24, 1891.

“DEAR FRIENDS—Every time I see a church officer I am cheered by tidings of your good condition as a church and people. In this there is joy for me. May our Lord keep us always united in love, fervent in prayer, and diligent in service!

“As for myself, I have made no progress this week; but have rather gone backward than forward. When a man cannot eat, how can he gather strength? I should have left home for the seaside if I had felt equal to the effort; but I am without energy, and must stay where I am. Oh, that I could be among you! But I must be patient, and wait our Father's will. Your prayers included health and strength for me, and these I shall yet have; for mere life is scarcely a blessing without them. May I beg you to continue in supplication? I am sure you will.

“If sharp pruning makes fruit-bearing branches bring forth more fruit, it is not a thing to be lamented when the great Vine-dresser turns His knife upon us. If I may in the end be more useful to you, and to those who come in and out among us, I shall rejoice in the woes which I have endured. May you each one when tried with sickness improve your school-time, that you may be the sooner able to learn and know all the Master's mind!

“God bless you this day by my dear brother, A. G. Brown. May he be happy in your midst, and may God be glorified! Few are the men like-minded with Mr. Brown, a brother tried and proved. Peace be to you and to your families!

“Yours most lovingly,

(SIGNED) *C. H. SPURGEON.*”

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